



**A project of the  
South Carolina  
Department of Education**

**Inez M. Tenenbaum  
State Superintendent of Education**

**2006–07  
Program Information and  
Application Guidelines and  
Materials**

Deadline for Notice of Intent: 5:00 p.m. on  
September 29, 2006

Deadline for Full Application Packets: 5:00  
p.m. on October 27, 2006



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## **Section I: General Information**

### **A. Purpose of the Red Carpet Schools Program**

The South Carolina Department of Education's Red Carpet Schools initiative was created in 2001 to reward schools that provide consistently outstanding customer service and family-friendly environments.

The Red Carpet Schools program was developed by the South Carolina Department of Education to reward schools that are warm, inviting places where people are welcomed and made to feel part of the school family. In these schools, parents, guardians, and members of the local community are actively involved on a regular basis.

The Red Carpet program model is important to the community because parents, guardians, and parents-to-be are making much more informed decisions about their children's schools, and their decisions are often based as much on the school's environment and appearance as on test scores and curricula.

### **B. Eligibility**

Schools that have never received the award or that earned the honor for the 2003–04 school year are eligible to apply. Schools that earned the honor for the 2004–05 school year will be eligible to apply again during the 2007–08 school year.

### **C. Notification of Award**

Awardees will be notified at the end of the 2006–07 school year.

### **D. On-site Visits and Telephone Calls**

Once full applications are received, applicants are subject to telephone calls and may receive on-site visits. Applications will be evaluated to determine which schools will receive unannounced on-site visits and telephone calls to evaluate their programs. While judges making these visits will not indicate that they are part of the Red Carpet evaluation process, they will follow all school rules and procedures for visitors.

### **E. Contact Person**

Frank White, Director of the Office of Parental and Community Partnerships, coordinates the Red Carpet Schools initiative. He can be reached by phone at 803-734-8367 or by e-mail at [fwhite@ed.sc.gov](mailto:fwhite@ed.sc.gov).



## F. Deadlines and Submission Procedures

To enter the application process, each school must first submit a **Notice of Intent** (using the form located on page 13 of this packet) to the Office of Parental and Community Partnerships by 5:00 p.m. on September 29, 2006. Schools that do not submit this notice will not be eligible to submit a full application and apply for the award. Applications received from schools not filing a Notice of Intent will be disqualified.

**Full applications** must be received in Room 906 in the South Carolina Department of Education by 5:00 p.m. on October 27, 2006.

## **Section II: Red Carpet School Attributes**

### A. Strategies for Becoming a Red Carpet School

Red Carpet Schools provide outstanding customer service, maintain the school campus and buildings, understand and celebrate diversity, communicate effectively, and build stable and durable relations with parents and the community.

The checklist and list of ideas provided in Appendices A and B enhance the following sections for becoming a Red Carpet School.

#### 1. Provide Outstanding Customer Service

How the school community treats parents and visitors will ultimately shape how the community treats the school, and a school's approach to customer service reveals much about the way the school personnel perceive parents and the local community. In this case, "customer" applies to students, faculty, staff, parents, and all visitors.

Red Carpet Schools satisfy the six criteria of customer service:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Friendliness:</i>              | Polite and courteous treatment of the customer                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Understanding and empathy:</i> | Understanding and appreciation of the customer's feelings                         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Fairness:</i>                  | Just and impartial treatment of all customers                                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Control:</i>                   | Perceived ability of the customer to impact the decision-making process           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Options and alternatives:</i>  | Belief by the customer that all avenues to satisfy their request will be explored |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Information:</i>               | Access to information, policies, and procedures provided to the customer          |

In forming a philosophy of customer service, consider the following questions:

- Is customer service training provided to all personnel who have contact with students, parents, teachers, and visitors? How often? Is attendance mandatory?
- What topics are covered in the customer service training? (Consider visitor reception, telephone skills, voice and electronic mail, parent-teacher conferences, listening skills, mediation skills, etc.)
- Who conducts the training? What are the trainer's qualifications?
- Is there a way for personnel to request training or refreshers on certain topics?
- Do you have an evaluation mechanism to inform you how well the training works?
- How long does a visitor wait before being assisted in the front office? Do front office staff members answer questions courteously? Do they refer visitors to the appropriate person quickly and professionally?
- How do you assess effective customer service? How does employee evaluation include customer service and friendliness?
- What type of action is taken so that everyone who enters your building is treated as a special guest? Are certain people treated more kindly than others?
- Who decides, and through what process, your school's customer service strategy and standards? How does customer service shape the school's mission statement?
- How does your school recognize staff for providing excellent customer service?
- Do teachers and other employees greet each other and visitors in the hallway?
- How do the students behave in the halls, the bathrooms, the cafeteria, and the playground? Is there an uncomfortable level of noise in the front office? In the halls?
- How do you solicit and receive feedback from visitors and personnel about their experience at your school?

## 2. Maintain the School Campus and Buildings

Consider these questions when evaluating the school's effect on visitors.

- Is the building in good condition? Are there broken windows, missing ceiling tiles, etc.?
- Are there any obvious safety hazards in the building?

- Does the school provide a secure and safe environment for students, teachers, and staff?
- Does the school seem as though it is a pleasant place to study, learn, and work? (Consider the media center, front office, bathrooms, classrooms, halls, etc.)
- Is office furniture and equipment adequately maintained?
- What (if any) elements convey a negative first impression?
- Are the classrooms clean, well lighted, adequately ventilated, and otherwise comfortable?

You may want to ask several staff members and/or parents (or even a person unfamiliar with your school) to join you on a tour of the entire school campus.

### 3. Understand and Celebrate Diversity

The school's ability to accommodate and celebrate diversity will suggest its ability to tolerate difference, adhere to fair practices, and help all students achieve their potential. When evaluating your school's ability to understand diversity, consider these questions:

- What are the demographics of the school's community? Where do your students live and under what conditions are students living? How are all personnel trained to understand the significance of these demographics?
- What type of training sessions are offered specifically designed with your community's needs in mind?
- What type of diversity training does your school offer? Does it include understanding and appreciating diverse cultures?
- How does your school accommodate diversity of languages and backgrounds, especially of your student population? How do you help families that do not speak English?
- Is everyone who enters your building treated as a special guest, or does the friendliness apply only to certain people?
- Are individuals treated consistently and fairly at your school? Are there practices at your school that make people feel they are being treated differently from others? (You may want to include this question in a survey to parents and students.)
- Are all students treated equally regarding access to academic offerings, extracurricular activities, fees, and discipline?

- Do students, teachers, and staff of different races and ethnicities interact regularly?
- What type of diversity training/multicultural education takes place in the classroom?
- Does your school have a policy on equitable treatment that specifically includes the rights of parents and outlines steps to ensure that parents are treated fairly? When and how do you review this policy with parents so that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities concerning fairness and equal treatment?

#### 4. Communicate Effectively

When evaluating your school's communications, consider the following questions:

- Does your school outline its policies and procedures in an easily understood and widely distributed format? Is the information accessible 24 hours a day? How many different ways do you make this information available?
- Does your school have a "Frequently Asked Questions" guide that is provided to all personnel, especially those in the front office?
- How do you communicate with parents and the community about fundamental school policies and procedures and the process to obtain more information?
- Are communications from your school clear, concise, and presented in an easy-to-understand format that is free of education jargon?
- How many ways do you communicate with your parents and community (such as electronic messages, electronic newsletters, Web sites, print newsletters, and telephone calls)?
- Are these communications available in a variety of formats and languages so that all parents, including those with special needs, can stay informed about events and issues at the school?
- What mechanisms have you built into the process so that you can get suggestions, responses, and feedback?
- How has technology advanced your ability and capacity to communicate with those inside and outside the school?
- What unique methods does your school use to share information? (For example, a "Do you know?" game at a parent-teacher organization meeting that includes a prize for the person who gets the most answers correct about school programs and procedures.)

- How often does your school survey parents, students, teachers, and members of the business community to gain an understanding of the school's reputation and to shape strategy to improve internal and external relations?
- How do you communicate to parents the resources that are available to them? Do you have a way to make sure they understand all of the options available to them in a particular situation? Do parents have a way to recommend alternatives of their own?
- Does your school provide a resource guide containing both school and non-school services for parents and community members? How do you help parents understand the value of these resources?

#### 5. Build Stable, Durable Relations with Parents and the Community

Inviting participation and sharing control with parents and the community can increase everyone's sense of commitment to the school. When evaluating the school's relations with parents and the community, consider these questions:

- How do you include parents in the decision-making process for the school as a whole, not just their child's education?
- What training exists to help staff and teachers understand and explore the ways that parents and the local community can participate in and contribute to the school?
- What professional development do you provide to help your teachers conduct parent-teacher conferences? To help parents participate in such conferences?
- Does your school have a parent liaison who might be able to attend the conferences as a benefit to both the teacher and the parent?
- When and where do you hold parent-teacher conferences? Consider altering times and going to job sites or central locations to accommodate parents.
- What options for volunteering do you provide? (During school hours, evening hours, weekend hours, on-site, off-site, etc.)
- What means do you and the school use to invite feedback and seek out the opinions or expertise of others?
- How do you discover special skills and abilities in your parent population and in the local community that you can engage to benefit the school?
- What unique ways do you provide for parents to interact with students?





### **Section III: Application Components/Assembly Order**

The application (Parts 1, 2, and 3) must NOT include photographs, newsletters, annual reports, or any extra attachments. Applications will not be considered if they include any materials not requested in these guidelines. An application must contain ONLY these items and in this order:

#### **Part 1: Cover Sheet**

Complete the Cover Sheet located on page 14. The signatures of both the principal and district superintendent must be in blue ink; no stamped or electronic signatures will be accepted. If a school serves more than one school district, only the original signature of one district superintendent is required; however, the application must have the signature of at least one district superintendent.

#### **Part 2: Application Narrative**

Maximum length: 16 pages (See guidelines for narrative sections on page 8.)

#### **Part 3: Communication Plan**

There is no page limit for the communication plan, but it must be double-spaced (including bulleted items, titles, and charts) in a 12-point font and have one-inch margins on all sides. The communication plan may be done in “landscape” format. Do not include a title page for the communication plan.

A well-developed communication plan helps a school fulfill its mission and meet its goals by outlining the methods to communicate with both internal and external groups. Each school has its own way of creating and maintaining effective relationships with the various groups it serves, but all effective school communications programs have a common element: a written plan. Your communication planning process should include these steps recommended by the National School Public Relations Association:

1. Conduct internal and external research to determine communications needs.
2. Develop communications goals and objectives.
3. Identify and define your target publics.
4. Identify the behaviors you desire of your target publics.
5. Determine the necessary steps to achieve desired behaviors.
6. Create strategies (overall procedures) and tactics (actions needed to carry out procedures) to reach your target publics.
7. Assign responsibility for all your strategies and tactics.
8. Develop a timeline using information from steps 6 and 7.
9. Implement your plan.
10. Evaluate your progress and successful achievement of goals/objectives.



An example of a communication plan from a Red Carpet award recipient is available at [Communication Plan](#). The narrative must be double-spaced (including bulleted items, titles, and charts) in a 12-point font and have one-inch margins (top, bottom, and sides).

Each section must begin on a new page. A “page” is an 8.5” x 11” sheet (printed on one side only). Do not combine sections. Each section must adhere to the stated page limits. Applications that exceed the page limits will not be considered. The pages of the entire application, including the communication plan, must be consecutively numbered.

Please write the application narrative sections in the following order:

#### **Narrative Components**

<b><i>Directions</i></b> (5 pages maximum)	Provide directions to your school as if you were giving them to people from <b>four</b> different parts of South Carolina. Include major roadways and landmarks in your directions. Applications that do not provide directions from four different parts of the state will be disqualified. The first page of the directions is page 1 of the application.
<b><i>Demographics</i></b> (2 pages maximum)	Provide a description of your community and student population. Include information such as number of students/persons, standard of living, diversity, percentage of students on free- or reduced-price lunch status, single-parent homes, poverty level, and other important demographic factors.
<b><i>Customer-Friendly Environment</i></b> (2 pages maximum)	Describe the family-friendly program at your school. Include the school’s customer service philosophy and current initiatives to provide a warm, inviting environment. Include evidence and the effectiveness of responding to the needs of parents and nonparents.

<b><i>Communication and Involvement</i></b> (3 pages maximum)	Describe the methods your school uses to 1) communicate with parents and nonparents and 2) involve parents and nonparents in your school. Include evidence of effectiveness for communication and involvement efforts. Show evidence that parents and nonparents are actively involved in decision-making.
<b><i>Technology</i></b> (2 pages maximum)	Describe how you use technology to communicate with visitors and parents. Include a description of your school Web site's contents. Include evidence of types of technology used and effectiveness. Show evidence of both one-way and two-way communication.
<b><i>Evaluation</i></b> (2 pages maximum)	Describe both the informal and formal methods your school uses to evaluate its family-friendly efforts. Include the results of these evaluations and how you are using the results from the teacher, student, and parent surveys associated with your school report cards from both spring 2005 and 2006 to improve your school. Show evidence that these actions are effective. Note: if your school does not have a school report card, please state this in the narrative and include the reason why.

## Section IV: Scoring Sheet/Points Available

Your application will be rated using the following point system:

Criteria/Scoring	Points
Cover Sheet	0
Directions	0
Demographics	0
Customer-Friendly Environment (maximum available points=10) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Description of customer service philosophy</li> <li>Evidence of inviting welcome for visitors</li> <li>Evidence of warm school environment</li> <li>Evidence of responding to the needs of parents/community</li> <li>Effectiveness of responding to the needs of parents/community</li> </ul>	2 2 2 2 2
Communication and Involvement (maximum available points=10) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities to communicate with parents</li> <li>Effectiveness of activities to communicate with parents</li> <li>Activities to communicate with nonparents</li> <li>Effectiveness of activities to communicate with nonparents</li> <li>Evidence of parents and nonparents actively involved in decision-making (more than just giving the opportunity to participate)</li> </ul>	2 2 2 2 2
Technology (maximum available points=10) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of technology</li> <li>Use of a variety of technology</li> <li>Effective use of technology</li> <li>Availability of Web site</li> <li>One-way vs. two-way communication</li> </ul>	2 2 2 2 2
Evaluation (maximum available points=10) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ease of parents, visitors to provide feedback/evaluation</li> <li>Informal and formal evaluation efforts</li> <li>Results of evaluations evident (both report card survey results and other evaluation efforts)</li> <li>Analysis of evaluations evident (both report card survey results and other evaluation efforts)</li> <li>Evidence of action taken based on evaluation results (both report card survey results and other evaluation efforts)</li> </ul>	2 2 2 2 2
Communication Plan (maximum available points=10) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate and achievable goals and objectives</li> <li>Comprehensive target groups (both external and internal)</li> <li>Communication strategies and tactics</li> <li>Evidence of yearlong efforts/program</li> <li>Evaluation</li> </ul>	2 2 2 2 2
<b>Total maximum points available</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Deductions for grammatical and/or spelling errors</b>	<b>-1 to -5</b>



## Section V: Application Instructions/Checklist

An application will be reviewed if it fulfills all of these requirements:

- ☐ Notices of Intent and full applications must be addressed to Frank White, Director, Office of Community and Parental Partnerships, South Carolina Department of Education, 1429 Senate Street, Suite 906, Columbia, South Carolina 29201.
- ☐ A Notice of Intent must be received in the Office of Community and Parental Partnerships **by 5:00 p.m. on September 29, 2006**. No faxed Notices of Intent will be accepted, but a Notice of Intent may be electronically submitted as an e-mail attachment to <mailto:fwhite@ed.sc.gov> **by 5:00 p.m. on September 29, 2006**. Notices of Intent will be acknowledged by e-mail.
- ☐ Full applications must be received in the Office of Community and Parental Partnerships **by 5:00 p.m. on October 27, 2006**. Applications with items not requested in the Applications Components/Assembly Order section (pages 8 and 9 of this packet) will not be considered.
- ☐ An application contains the following sections in the following order: Cover Sheet, Directions, Demographics, Customer Friendly Environment, Communication and Involvement, Technology, Evaluation, and Communication Plan. No handwritten applications will be considered.
- ☐ Each section must begin on a new page (an 8.5" x 11" sheet) and printed on one side only. Do not combine sections. Applications where any section exceeds the page limits will not be considered.
- ☐ All applications must be double-spaced (including titles, bulleted items, and charts) in a 12-point font with one-inch margins on all sides. Headers that take more than one line can be single-spaced. This is the only place where single-spacing is permitted. No handwritten applications will be considered.
- ☐ Title each page with your school's name, district, section, and page number. Titles must begin on the left of the page at the one-inch margin, and text should be double-spaced below it. A sample format is available at [Format Example](#) following is how a page header should look:

Main Street Elementary School, Local School District One, Demographics, Page 1

Applications that do not follow the format specified for titles will not be considered.

- ☐ The communication plan has no page limit, but it must be double-spaced (including bulleted items, titles, and charts) in a 12-point font and have one-inch margins on all sides. Do not include a separate title page for the communication plan. The communication plan is not an "attachment" or document separate from the application, but is a part of the application, and it should follow the sequential numbering of the application. The communication plan must adhere to all formatting guidelines including title specifications. The communication plan can be in a "landscape" format.



- ☐ A complete application packet is an original and six complete copies—each stapled in the upper left-hand corner. The copies must show the signatures found on the original. No incomplete copies will be reviewed. Applications in binders or folders or held together with paper clips or binder clips will not be considered.
- ☐ The original application must have signatures, in blue ink, of both the principal and district superintendent, and these signatures must show on the copies. No stamped or electronic signatures will be accepted. Do not include additional signatures. If a school serves more than one school district, only the signature of one district superintendent is required.
- ☐ After making the six extra copies, print the word “original” in the upper-right hand corner of the original application cover sheet, and place it on top of the stack.



## Section VI: Forms and Attachments

### Notice of Intent

2006–07 Red Carpet Schools Award

Schools applying for recognition as one of our Red Carpet Schools must submit this one-page notice **by 5:00 p.m. on September 29, 2006**. No faxed copies will be accepted. A Notice of Intent may be electronically submitted as an e-mail attachment to [fwhite@ed.sc.gov](mailto:fwhite@ed.sc.gov) **by 5:00 p.m. on September 29, 2006**. If a Notice of Intent is incomplete or if an electronic version is not received as an attachment, it will NOT be considered.

School: _____	Grade levels: _____
Street: _____	School phone number: _____ - _____ - _____
City, state, zip: _____	School fax number: _____ - _____ - _____
Principal: _____	
Principal's e-mail: _____	
School district: _____	

Return this form **by 5:00 p.m. on September 29, 2006**, to

Frank White  
Director, Office of Community and Parental Partnerships  
South Carolina Department of Education  
1429 Senate Street, Suite 906  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

*Schools that have never earned the honor or earned the honor for the 2003–04 school year are eligible to apply. Schools that earned the honor for the 2004–05 school year will be eligible to apply again during the 2007–08 school year. Schools that earned the honor for the 2005–06 school year will be eligible to apply again during the 2008–09 school year.*



## Cover Sheet

2006–07 Red Carpet Schools Award

School: _____	Grade levels: _____
Street: _____	School phone number: _____ - _____ - _____
City, state, zip: _____	
Principal: _____	School fax number: _____ - _____ - _____
Principal's e-mail: _____	
School district: _____	

*I understand that unannounced site visits and telephone calls may be made to verify information in this application.*

Signed:

Principal's name (printed or typed): \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's original signature (in blue ink): \_\_\_\_\_

District superintendent's name (printed or typed): \_\_\_\_\_

District superintendent's original signature (in blue ink): \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix A: Customer Service Checklist**

Application reviewers will be using this checklist to evaluate your school.

### ***School Exterior***

- ☐ There are clearly marked visitor parking spaces near the front door.
- ☐ The well-kept grounds are free of debris and trash.
- ☐ The entrances, particularly the main entrance door, are plainly marked.

### ***Front Entrance***

- ☐ The lobby or front entrance is clean and appealing.
- ☐ “Welcome to Our School” signs clearly direct visitors to the main office.
- ☐ There are attractive, colorful displays of student achievement and school events.

### ***Front Office***

- ☐ The front office is clean and tidy.
- ☐ There is a comfortable waiting area with sufficient seats for visitors separate from students waiting to see the principal or assistant principal.
- ☐ Reading material about the school is available for visitors.
- ☐ Welcoming and professionally dressed staff members greet visitors promptly and offer assistance.
- ☐ The front office has live plants and other extra touches that demonstrate a caring attitude.
- ☐ Visitor badges are available.

### ***Communication***

- ☐ Telephones are answered professionally and promptly (within three rings).
- ☐ A friendly greeting is used, identifying the school and person’s name.
- ☐ The person answering the phone has basic up-to-date information readily accessible.
- ☐ Callers are put through to appropriate parties promptly.
- ☐ Callers “on hold” are checked on and given status updates every twenty to thirty seconds.
- ☐ Emergency calls are handled professionally and appropriately.

## Appendix B: Ideas for Creating a Red Carpet School

### Effective customer service habits to develop

- Start the day off right.
- Discuss your feelings. Do not vent them.
- Support your school's decisions.
- Learn to listen.
- Use good telephone etiquette.
- Thank persons often.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say. Be on time.
- Follow up on your promises.
- "Underpromise" and "overdeliver."
- Go the extra mile.
- Offer your customer some options.
- Express empathy with your customer.
- Treat your customer as the most important part of your job.
- Treat your coworkers as customers.
- Give the customer your name and phone number.
- Smile when you are on the phone.
- Do the right thing.

### **Rather than saying,**

- "I don't know."
- "No."
- "That's not my job."
- "You're right—this stinks."
- "That's not my fault."
- "You need to talk to my supervisor."
- "You want it by when?"
- "Calm down."
- "I'm busy right now."
- "Call me back."

### **Instead, say**

- "I'll find out."
- "What I can do is . . ."
- "This is who can help you . . ."
- "I understand your frustration."
- "I can help you."
- "Let's see what we can do about this."
- "I'll try my best."
- "I'm sorry."
- "I'll be with you in just a moment."
- "I'll call you back."

*Attitudes are contagious. Are yours worth catching?*